

Hornaday on the Destruction of our Birds and Mammals.¹—In this report Mr. Hornaday has furnished us with a mass of information relative to the destruction of our wild birds and mammals which should demand the earnest consideration of every ornithologist and sportsman throughout the country, and which cannot fail to prove an important factor in encouraging the sentiment for bird protection which is beginning to make itself apparent.

The bird report is based upon replies from correspondents in all parts of the country relative to the destruction of birds, the most potent agencies in effecting destruction, species which are becoming extinct, and the number of birds to-day as compared with fifteen years ago.

The most serious causes of the decrease of bird life seem to be: (1) the great increase in sportsmen or rather "so-called sportsmen"; (2) pot hunters; (3) plume hunters; (4) egg collectors; (5) English sparrow; (6) clearing away of timber, and (7) Italians, who kill all sorts of birds for food.

The decrease of all kinds of game birds as evidenced by all the reports is startling, as is also the growing tendency in the South to regard various song and insectivorous birds as game, when the real game birds become scarce. As Mr. Hornaday truly says, "the protection of migratory birds must be general," we cannot protect our summer birds in the North if they are to be shot in winter in the South.

In regard to the destruction of bird life in general, the figures given by Mr. Hornaday (Connecticut, 75% destroyed; New York, 48%; Indiana, 60%, etc.) will hardly be accepted by those who have had experience in estimating the numbers of individual birds in the field.

It is not possible to compare the birds of fifteen years ago with those of to-day and say with any degree of accuracy that the decrease is one-half or two-thirds, relying solely on memory. As a matter of fact how many of the persons quoted can state the number of birds breeding in a definite area in their vicinity last year, not to speak of fifteen years ago? It is one thing to guess and quite another to make an accurate census, and without definite figures we are practically stating the ratio between two unknown quantities which we can only compare in memory.

So many things have to be taken into consideration in estimating the abundance of our small birds that it is exceedingly difficult to hazard a comparison even between two successive years unless a person has been constantly afield and is conversant with the vagaries of migration, etc.

It is significant that scarcely any of the more prominent field orni-

¹The Destruction of our Birds and Mammals. By William T. Hornaday, Director of the New York Zoölogical Park. Extracted from the Second Annual Report of the New York Zoölogical Society, pp. 77-126, March 15, 1898.

thologists, whose names appear in the report, give the remarkable figures which influence Mr. Hornaday's estimates.

Game and plume birds are unquestionably on the high road to extermination, and certain species of our small birds are decreasing, but the general destruction in the latter class is probably not nearly so great as Mr. Hornaday's figures imply.

This side of the question is of such especial importance to ornithologists that it seems desirable to emphasize the difficulty of reaching accurate results from such data, — especially as sentiment often unconsciously leads us to make extreme statements.

The estimates on page 95 to which we take exception do not, however, detract from the importance and beneficial effect of this valuable report, and it is earnestly to be hoped that Mr. Hornaday's closing suggestions, both as to birds and mammals, may be seriously considered by our legislators, especially as to the suppression of promiscuous egg collecting and traffic in eggs, birds, and game. — W. S.

Sketches of Some Common Birds.¹—The author has here brought together a series of bird biographies most of which have been published previously in periodicals. They treat at considerable length of fifty-five species and, issued in book form, make a valuable contribution to our knowledge of the life-histories of our more common birds.

They are based on observations apparently all made in central Illinois and evidently extending over a considerable term of years. Mr. Silloway writes with the enthusiasm of a bird-lover and the care of a discriminating bird-student. He presents facts which we do not recall having seen before in print, but to our mind is rather further from the mark than most authors when he writes of birds' notes. Thus he states that the Bobolinks of his region are not superior as songsters to the Horned Larks or Dickcissels, the American Bittern's booming cry suggests to him the syllables "boo-hoo," and while his biography of the Least Bittern shows that he has had excellent opportunities to study this interesting species, he seems unfamiliar with its *coo, qua,* and *tut-tut-tut* notes, saying that he has "never heard an individual utter a call or cry of any kind."

The book deserves an index and in supplying it we trust that the author will also give a prefatory note stating where and when his observations were made.

The illustrations are half-tone reproductions of interesting photographs of birds and nests from nature. — F. M. C.

Oölogical Abnormalities.²—Having devoted much time to securing sets

¹ Sketches | of | Some Common Birds | By | P. M. Silloway | Cincinnati, Ohio | The Editor Publishing Company | No. 327 Pike Building | 1897. 8vo. pp. 331, pll. 17.

² Gleanings from Nature, No. 1. Oölogical Abnormalities. By J. Warren Jacobs. Published by the Author, Waynesburg, Pa. 1898. 8vo, pp. 36, half-tone pll. iv.